

The building trades vocational program provides a wealth of confidence and economic opportunity, as we learned carpentry basics. From the hands-on approach, to the use of power tools, reading blue prints, and constructing a 14 by 18 foot dwelling from the foundation to the roof—this course has the potential to change lives and reduce recidivism.

We started with the basics of safety, work place ethics, and resource management. Then we began team projects that focused on how we each played a part in completing a task. Men from different parts of the state, different races, and different faiths that would not normally associate in the yard, now must build something from the basic materials our earth provides—together.

However, a top notch program cannot be successful without a qualified facilitator. Mr. Cruse possesses the knowledge and real-world experience that compliments the books and videos. Short cuts—we can learn that on our own when we have a job, he'd say. In this setting, we are taught the solid foundation and tools to use, especially when technology fails.

The sense of achievement upon completion of our 14 by 18 foot building is no match to any other program that I have encountered in the prison system. It empowers an individual and gives a sense of hope. For many of us, we can now be of value to our community. And in some cases, a path to restitution.

*Shon Pernice*